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Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6256th meeting

Tuesday, 12 January 2010, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kravchenko
	Turkey	Mr. Çorman
	Uganda	Mr. Baitera
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Quarrey
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2009/682)

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10-20643 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2009/682)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Djinnit to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/682, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Said Djinnit, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Djinnit: I am honoured to brief the Council on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) over the past six months. In spite of the great complexity of country-specific and cross-border issues in West Africa, UNOWA continues to implement its mandate with determination and faith in the immense opportunities for subregional peace.

West Africa continues to show a mixed picture of hope and concern. Since my last briefing to the Security Council in July 2009 (see S/PV.6157), there have been improvements in West Africa in the areas of conflict prevention, recovery and peacebuilding. However, that progress is threatened by insufficient guarantees and assurances for sustainable progress. UNOWA has been raising attention and working in synergy with other United Nations entities in West Africa to address that situation. Our action is focused on a number of priorities, including encouraging recovery efforts in countries affected by crisis, consolidating good governance and the rule of law, promoting human rights and gender mainstreaming in those countries that are stable but still at risk, and raising awareness of the imperative need for economic growth and the fair distribution of wealth.

Through our contacts with subregional organizations, the region's main stakeholders and leaders and our partners, we are continuously raising awareness of those priorities and of the importance both of addressing the prevailing causes of violent conflict and mitigating the structural causes of instability. By strengthening its political institutions and seeking better prospects for economic growth and development, West Africa should be able to improve the quality of life for the majority of its population, and thereby minimize the possibility of frustration, social tension and, ultimately, violence.

In our collaboration with other United Nations entities in West Africa, inter-mission cooperation remains high on UNOWA's agenda. I am proud of the growing collaboration we have developed. Similarly, I am pleased with the close cooperation that UNOWA has been able to build with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union in our common objective to address the daunting challenge of establishing peace and security in the subregion. That close collaboration has allowed our three institutions to develop a common and coherent position and strategy to address some of the region's most pressing problems, in particular unconstitutional changes of Government and other political crises.

The prospects for long-term peace in West Africa will very much depend on how effective our efforts are in sustaining the progress achieved thus far, both before and following the withdrawal of the United Nations peace operations from the subregion.

The march towards democracy and the rule of law has made giant strides over the past few years. However, national institutions remain weak and unstable. In some countries, including those that are considered stable, positive trends towards consolidating democratic processes remain fragile and reversible, as evidenced by the recurrence of constitutional reviews, as we have observed in Niger, and election-related instability, which we are trying to avoid in Togo. Those challenges continue to undermine the stability of States and their institutions and, as such, must be addressed in a sustained manner.

On the economic side, the prevailing vulnerability of the West African region to external economic and financial shocks and their negative impact on the livelihood of populations have contributed to social unrest and political violence in some countries. The increased vulnerability of the region to natural disasters — essentially those induced by climate change — is becoming a major source of conflict and violence, in that it generates humanitarian emergencies and exacerbates competition for dwindling natural resources.

As the Security Council and the Secretary-General have stated on several occasions, security sector reform (SSR) remains a major condition for durable peace in West Africa. The situation in Guinea is yet another illustration of how the defence and security sector is key to stabilizing the country, both because of its still-predominant political role and the potentially explosive tensions prevailing within the security architecture. In Guinea and elsewhere, therefore, security sector reform has become a priority area for our conflict prevention efforts. UNOWA's SSR strategy is directed at supporting and advising ECOWAS while ensuring that the United Nations approach to SSR in West Africa is harmonized. Obviously, much remains to be done on both aspects, but signs of progress within institutions are already encouraging.

Also encouraging are the efforts being conducted at all levels to raise awareness of the threat to peace and stability posed by drug trafficking and organized crime in West Africa, including the menace of terrorism — especially in the Sahel band. In that regard, the ongoing efforts to implement the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa, with the strong backing of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNOWA, have gained momentum with the donor conference held in Vienna on 3 December 2009. As an initial step in international support for the Regional Action Plan, the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) project has been accelerated, with joint assessment missions having been conducted in Sierra Leone and Liberia in November and December 2009. Missions to other countries will follow this year.

In parallel to the establishment of transnational crime units in the countries concerned, I wish to highlight the critical need to increase awareness of and galvanize commitment to the ECOWAS Action Plan among senior Government officials in the region. UNOWA will continue to play its important role in promoting cohesion and mobilizing support at all levels, in liaison with other stakeholders, so that that the Initiative can achieve its ultimate goals. As the United Nations entity charged with mentoring and monitoring the implementation of the WACI project on behalf of the Organization, UNOWA will continue to seek creative and cost-efficient ways to enhance its technical capacity in the area of drug trafficking, including by making use of inter-mission cooperation mechanisms and extrabudgetary resources.

The prevailing situation in Guinea, which shares borders with all the United Nations peace missions in the subregion, is an embodiment of the combined challenge of ensuring sustainability, stability and security sector reform in West Africa. If left unaddressed, the crisis in Guinea could spill over to the subregion and threaten prospects for lasting peace and the significant investments and achievements made by the region and the international community in countries with United Nations peace missions in particular. That is the very reason that UNOWA has devoted considerable attention to the situation in Guinea and spared no effort in encouraging an early solution.

The current developments in Guinea are encouraging, especially following the recent statement by the interim leader reaching out to the opposition to participate in charting a road map for the resolution of the political crisis. This consensual approach proposed by the interim junta leader, combined with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on the 28 September violence, provides a new window of opportunity that should be seized by all stakeholders in order to put the peace and reconciliation process back on track. For its part, UNOWA is committed to continuing to play its proactive role and to make its contribution to the search for a lasting solution to the crisis in Guinea.

Allow me to conclude my statement by expressing my appreciation for the attention the Council continues to devote to West Africa and for its continuing support to UNOWA.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.